

Ten years ago, in a paper on alternation of generations in animals,⁸ the reviewer predicted that gametophytes more reduced than those known at that time might still be found. Miss PACE soon described the *Cypripedium* type and afterward various investigators found digressions from the "normal" type in *Peperomia*, *Penaea*, *Oenothera*, *Clintonia*, *Lawia*, *Podostemon*, *Dicraea*, *Helosis*, and *Plumbagella*.

It is interesting to note that the most reduced sac has not been found in the most advanced family. It has been a prevalent custom for investigators to focus their attention upon forms which at the moment seemed to have particular phylogenetic significance, forgetting not only that phylogenetic schemes might be awry, but also that facts of great importance in interpreting phylogeny might be found in plants not in the supposed line of ascent.—C. J. CHAMBERLAIN.

Phytopathology in the tropics.—Dr. JOHANNA WESTERDIJK presented a paper at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Missouri Botanical Garden⁹ dealing with the general facts concerning plant diseases in the tropics, based upon recent observations she had made in the Dutch colonies of the East Indies. The combination of high temperature and moisture would seem to be peculiarly favorable to fungi, and therefore to diseases of economic plants induced by fungi; but in fact there are only a few such diseases of real importance. Not only among cultivated plants, but also among the native plants are attacks of fungi rare. Dr. WESTERDIJK has concluded that the tropical temperature is too high for many fungi, a conclusion confirmed also by experimental work. The condition of the tropical host is also unfavorable for invasion by fungi because of the high water content and small air content of the tissues concerned. Among the disease-producing fungi in the tropics, mention is made of the root fungi (certain Hymenomycetes) which attack practically all cultural woody plants. The fungi (certain Ascomycetes and Fungi Imperfecti) inducing die-back diseases of orchards and forests, so common in temperate regions, are represented in the tropics only by a *Corticium* (a Hymenomycete); and there are no representatives of the powdery mildews (Erysiphaceae). The relation of fungus attacks to temperature is well shown in the behavior of *Phytophthora infestans* in Java, where potatoes are cultivated in mountain districts between 1500 and 6000 feet altitude. In the lower areas the infected regions are rare, but in ascending to the higher areas of lower temperature, the more destructive does *Phytophthora* become. Among the rusts there is only one representative of importance in tropical agriculture, namely the coffee leaf disease (*Hemileia vastatrix*). Leaf spot diseases are much less frequent than in Europe or in the United States; while bacterial

⁸ BOT. GAZ. 39:137-144. 1905.

⁹ WESTERDIJK, JOHANNA, Phytopathology in the tropics. Annals Mo. Bot. Gard. 2:307-313. 1915.

diseases are scarcely to be found. The general conclusion is that the small part which fungi play in the plant diseases of the tropics is not due to the absence of fungi, but the tropical conditions that influence the hosts in their relation to parasites.—J. M. C.

Soil acidity.—DAIKUHARA¹⁰ finds that more than 75 per cent of the soils of Japan and Korea are acid, while the Chinese, South Oceanic, and European soils show little or no acid. This is due to the difference in geological formations, climatic conditions, and fertilization methods. Soils of acid rock origin show the most prevalent acidity, those of basic origin less, and those of laval ash are generally free from acids. Mesozoic formations are most commonly acid; tertiary, paleozoic, and diluvial next; and alluvial formations least. The condition in Japan and Korea is related to the common occurrence of acid soils in the United States. The author finds that more than half of the cases of acidity are due to aluminium and iron compounds of acid reaction that are adsorbed by the colloids of the soil and set free upon the addition of such fertilizer salts as KCl, K₂SO₄, KNO₃, and NaCl. In these soils fertilizing with neutral salts alone often proves very detrimental, but fertilizing with neutral salts plus lime is highly beneficial. More than 50 per cent of the cases of soil acidity in Japan and Korea are due to this colloidal phenomenon. The author cites from mineralogies a number of iron and aluminium compounds that are acid in reaction, as phosphates, double salts of silicates, etc. It was already known that negative colloids of the soil often render lime-poor soils acid by adsorbing the basic ion of neutral salts and setting free the acid. The author speaks of his finding as a newly discovered source of soil acidity. He has developed a test for soil acidity that shows advantages over the litmus, Baumann and Gully, or the Loew tests. He has also evolved a method for the quantitative determination of soil acidity. The acid soils generally bear little lime, and the lime factor is unfavorable, owing to the excess of magnesium.

We are now coming to recognize that many acid-forming processes take a part in the dissolution of lime from the soil and the final rendering of it acid. The two absorption processes described above are only two of the several known.¹¹—WILLIAM CROCKER.

Field physiology of cotton.—BALLS and HOLTON¹² have published an article on analysis of agricultural yield which exemplifies the application of

¹⁰ DAIKUHARA, G., Über saure Mineralböden. Bull. Imp. Cent. Agr. Exp. Sta. Japan 2:1-40. 1914.

¹¹ Readers will be interested in the following citations from American literature, in addition to the literature in the foregoing paper: HARRIS, J. E., Soil acidity and methods for its detection. Science N.S. 40:491-493. 1914. TROUG, E. A., A new method for the determination of soil acidity. Science N.S. 40:246-248. 1914. BARKER, J. F., and COLLISON, R. C., Ground limestone for acid soils. Bull. 400. Geneva Exp. Sta. New York. 1915.

¹² BALLS, W. L., and HOLTON, F. S., Analysis of agricultural yield. Part I. The spacing experiments with Egyptian cotton, 1912. Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. London B 206:103-180. 1915.